



Office of the Vice President for Mission

TO: The Gonzaga Community
FROM: Frank E. Case, S.J. and Shanea Giroux
SUBJ: Moment for Mission
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Footprints in the Sand

This is the week that we Christians celebrate the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus. It is not an easy passage for many. St. Ignatius in his Spiritual Exercises suggests that in our prayer over these events we adopt an attitude of quiet accompaniment of Christ as he undergoes his suffering and death. Those of us who have lost loved ones know the feelings of accompanying them through their process of dying. Often words seem superfluous and all that is needed is a comforting presence and the loving touch of a hand. This is a great form of prayer, a profound expression of love.

At times during his passion, Christ in a very human way expressed a sense of abandonment by God – “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?” I think we have all experienced times when we share that feeling. We wonder where God is in life’s tragedies, in our moments of difficulty, of loss, of watching a loved one – or anyone – suffer. It’s the old “problem of evil”. Job in the Hebrew Scriptures surely knew the feeling, and was free to give expression to it. And God doesn’t seem to resent such expressions. God loves us in and for our humanness, and accompanies *us* in our own times of passion, suffering, and all the little deaths that are an unavoidable part of our lives – ageing, going bald, passing from the exciting “honeymoon” phase of a new job to the quieter, less explosive routine of daily life and work.

I’ve always found the prayer “Footprints in the Sand” helpful in such circumstances.

FOOTPRINTS IN THE SAND

One night I dreamed I was walking
along the beach with the Lord.
Many scenes from my life flashed
across the sky. In each scene I
noticed footprints in the sand.

Sometimes there were two sets of
footprints, other times there was one
only. This bothered me because I
noticed that during the low periods of
my life, when I was suffering from
anguish, sorrow or defeat,

I could see only one set of footprints,
so I said to the Lord,
"You promised me Lord,
that if I followed you, you would walk
with me always. But I have noticed
that during the most trying periods of
my life there has only been one set of
footprints in the sand.

Why, when I needed you most, have
you not been there for me?"

The Lord replied,
"The years when you have seen only
one set of footprints,
my child, is when I carried you."